

REMARKS

This is intended as a full and complete response to the Final Office Action dated June 18, 2003, having a shortened statutory period for response set to expire on September 18, 2003. Claims 34-42 have been added. Claims 27-42 remain pending after entry of this response. Please reconsider the claims pending in the application for the reasons discussed herein.

Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for conducting the interview on August 19. The arguments and amendments herein are presented in accordance with the substance of the interview to place the application in condition for allowance.

Claims 28 and 30-33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claim 28 has been amended for clarification in accordance with the Examiner's comments. With respect to claim 30, Applicant has amended the claim to recite a "second end" instead of "a second tubular member" for clarification. With respect to claims 32-33, Applicant would like to point out that the "first end" and the "second end" designations are relative. Therefore, the second end may be disposed "outwardly" or "inwardly" as recited in claims 32-33. Withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

Claims 27-28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by *Lohbeck*.

Lohbeck discloses a connector for interconnecting expandable tubing. As seen in Figure 1, the tubing and the connector are interconnected using a screw. Additionally, the end of the tubing in contact with the connector includes overlapping slots. In contrast, Figure 2 of the present invention shows the end of the tubular in contact with the connector do not include overlapping slots. *Lohbeck* does not teach, show, or suggest co-joining the tubulars to form a connection region having non-overlapping slots, wherein the connection region includes the ends of the tubulars

forming the connection, as recited in claim 27. Therefore, Applicant believes claims 27-28 are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests allowance of the same.

Claims 29-33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by PCT 96/37,681. The Examiner states that the reference discloses an expandable connection having a first tubular having a first connection member 32 on a first end and a second tubular member 28 adjacent a portion of the inter-engaged first and second connection members.

WO 96/37681 discloses a connector assembly (20) for connecting expandable slotted tubing (EST) (10) comprises tubular first and second parts (22, 24) for mounting on the ends of respective lengths of slotted tubing. The parts (22, 24) are themselves slotted (26). The free end of the first part defines a male portion (28) and the free end of the second part defining a female portion (30). As seen in Figure 1, item (28) is disposed adjacent threaded portion (32). Additionally, when connected the male and female portion include overlapping slots. The reference does not teach, show, or suggest a substantially cylindrical member disposed adjacent the inter-engaged first and second connection members, wherein the substantially cylindrical member and the first and second connection members form a connection region having non-overlapping slots, as recited in claim 29. Further, the reference does not teach, show, or suggest an expandable tubular having a first end and a second end, the first end having a first connection member, and wherein the second end is disposed adjacent a portion of the inter-engaged first and second connection members along a second substantially cylindrical surface, as recited in claims 30-33. Further still, the reference does not teach, show, or suggest the second end is disposed inwardly of the connection members, as recited in claim 33. Therefore, Applicant believes the claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests allowance of the same.

In conclusion, the reference cited by the Examiner does not teach, show, or suggest the apparatus of the present invention. Having addressed all issues set out in the office action, Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests that the same be allowed.

Respectfully submitted,



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